

The Cost of American Militarism and an Absence of Debate

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Global Research, November 16, 2018

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Militarization and WMD](#)

A recent [report](#) by Brown University's Watson Institute of International and Public Affairs on the cost of America's wars in the aftermath of 9/11 estimates a sum totalling \$5.9 Trillion. It is a figure virtually identical to the \$6 Trillion figure projected by Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government in 2013 to be the eventual cost of waging wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Yet, as with the case of the increased danger of a [nuclear war](#) that could be the fruit of strained relations developed over the past decade with the Russian Federation, there has been no public debate in the United States about why America embarked on a programme of militarism predicated on the waging of a so-called War on Terror.

Such debate would necessarily have to centre on the three following areas:

1. The “hijacking” (to use the term chosen by retired US Four Star General Wesley Clark) of American foreign policy in the aftermath of the September attacks by a group of neoconservatives operating within the administration of President George W. Bush who drew up a ‘hit-list’ of seven countries intended to be destroyed over a five year period.

It would have been expected that all such countries earmarked for destruction would have had a connection to the planning of the September attacks, or, at least, have been sympathetic to the values guiding the alleged perpetrators of the deadliest attack on American soil since Pearl Harbor in 1941. Yet Iraq, Libya and Syria were all secular Arab states implacably opposed to the Sunni Islamist ideology of al-Qaeda, and Iran is a Shia nation. The common denominator among these states including Lebanon, or more accurately, Hezbollah, the Iranian-backed Lebanese Shia militia, was an enmity with the State of Israel.

As Clark stated during a [speech](#) given in October 2007 at the Commonwealth Club of California in San Francisco, there was never a public debate on a policy which commenced with the invasion of Iraq and was intended to be completed with an attack on Iran.

2. The unchanging policy from the administrations led by Bush Jr to Barack Obama and now Donald Trump due to ‘Deep State’ actors wielding power outside of the separated organs of government. In a scholarly paper-turned-book entitled [National Security and Double Government](#), Michael J. Glennon, a professor of international law at Tufts University, has referred to the power usurping “Trumanite” institutions in contrast to the troika of “Madisonian” institutions of state, which he persuasively argues are no longer accountable in the way people think they are.

3. The corporate welfare culture surrounding the military industry as composed of the

Pentagon and corporations such as Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon and others. The exorbitant costs involved with the development of the F-35 fighter plane which according to a number of US generals is pretty much “useless”, is emblematic of the inefficient weapons development regime that is more concerned with lining the pockets of corporations than with efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

The aforementioned, of course, do not mention the human cost: that of innocent civilian lives destroyed by military invasions, drone attacks and covert wars initiated by the United States. It also does not include the number of US service personnel killed, maimed and suffering from mental traumas.

All need to be factored into a comprehensive debate on why America’s sovereign debt has spiralled to uncontrollable levels, and also, why the moral standing of the United States among the international community of nations has been brought down to an all-time low.

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